

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5177

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Health Care, February 2, 2017

**Title:** An act relating to requiring long-term care workers to be trained to recognize hearing loss.

**Brief Description:** Requiring long-term care workers to be trained to recognize hearing loss.

**Sponsors:** Senators Bailey, Keiser, Palumbo and Conway.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health Care: 1/26/17, 2/02/17 [DP].

<p><b>Brief Summary of Bill</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requires long-term care workers to be trained to recognize hearing loss.</li></ul>
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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Rivers, Chair; Becker, Vice Chair; Cleveland, Ranking Minority Member; Kuderer, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Conway, Keiser, Miloscia, Mullet, O'Ban and Walsh.

**Staff:** Kathleen Buchli (786-7488)

**Background:** A long-term care worker is any person who provides paid, hands-on personal care services for the elderly or persons with disabilities. The term includes individual providers of home care services, direct care workers employed by home care agencies, providers of home care services to people with developmental disabilities, direct care workers in assisted-living facilities and adult family homes, and respite care providers. The term does not include employees of nursing homes, hospitals, acute care settings, residential habilitation centers, hospice agencies, adult day care centers, and adult day health centers. The term also excludes people who are not paid by the state, any private agency, or facility licensed by the state to provide personal care services.

Long-term care workers must meet statutory training requirements within 120 days of being hired. These training requirements include 75 hours of entry-level training that must include:

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- two hours of orientation training regarding their caregiver role;
- three hours of safety training, including basic safety precautions, emergency procedures and infection control;
- seventy hours of long-term care basic training, including training relating to core competencies and population specific competencies.

**Summary of Bill:** The 70 hours of long-term care basic training must include training relating to identification of hearing loss in a client and how to seek assistance if hearing loss is suspected.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: People who are experiencing hearing loss give signs to others that can be recognized as possible hearing loss. People who cannot hear become non-communicative and isolated, it leads to their underlying medical conditions becoming worse and is detrimental to them. Long-term care workers need to recognize when their patients can't hear. As we age, hearing loss increases; this is a public health problem. Seniors are more productive if they can hear. It is essential that long-term care workers be trained to recognize hearing loss and to ensure that the needs of the patient are being met by the services they receive. Long-term care workers help people to age in place which is the preferred place for people and which saves the state money. The long-term care worker is a communication partner with the senior; additional education will help them to hear and will increase quality of life. Communication tips for long-term care workers need to be added so that people know that things like shouting at people with hearing loss does not help. They also need to learn that listening with hearing loss is exhausting. Hearing loss is embarrassing to people and they tend to act like they know what is going on when they really are becoming more isolated. Hardly any training provided now addresses hearing loss.

CON: The WACs contain six pages of training that long-term care workers must take before they may provide care. Some of the training addresses recognizing cognitive changes. This should be addressed through the current training.

OTHER: Hearing loss is a broad problem and people need resources so they do not go without treatment. Long-term care workers are not physicians and they cannot be expected to notice or diagnose hearing loss. Putting this in the existing training may water down the training program that is currently in place. This could be added as a continuing education course and not as a basic training requirement.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Barbara Bailey, Prime Sponsor; Cynthia Stewart, citizen; Kelly Tremblay, Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA); Diana Thompson, HLAA; Christine Seymour, CS-DHHRS.

CON: David Knutson, Washington Health Care Association.

OTHER: Demas Nesterenko, SEIU775.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.